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THE BIBLICAL WORLD

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EDITORIAL LETTER.

TO THE READERS:

IT would be an easy matter to show that never before, at any one time, were so many persons as now—literal millions—giving their earnest attention to the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Man and the Son of God. “He must increase,” said John the Baptist of him. Jesus has become more and more the guide, the inspiration, the savior of men. Multiply literature as we may, the gospels are not superseded. The story they tell is as significant as when first written. After all the historical investigations have been made, and the ascertained results have been accepted, Jesus stands forth unique and preëminent, essentially as before. The light which he cast into a gloomy world, the meaning which he gave to life, the ideal of humanity which he established, the love, hope, and service which he inspired—these things do not pass away with the years; on the contrary, they take hold of men with greater and still greater strength.

The passing century has been arduously engaged in the historical study of the New Testament facts and literature. The history of long ago has been revived, our understanding of first-century events has been in some respects corrected, and it is quite within the facts to say that Jesus stands before men today as a historical character more certainly and more clearly than in any previous century except his own. We are thankful for this assurance that Jesus was real; if some can waive the question of Jesus’ historicity, the majority can rest only in a certainty

that Jesus lived among men, that he walked and taught, that he served and suffered, that he lived and died for men.

The world needs to know Jesus; and to know him — really to know him — is to follow him. This is the testimony of the ages. All the exaltation of Jesus, all the aspiration toward Jesus, which have been bestowed by the succeeding generations of Christians, have been true estimations of his worth to these hungry, struggling souls in their search for that which is true and permanent, which can give comfort and peace. And our problem is the same as theirs; we need Jesus as they needed him. We need the forgiveness which he promises, the trust which he inspires, the view of existence which he had, the manner of life which he lived, the love and service to God and our fellow-men which he taught and exemplified.

A true historical study of the life of Christ revives within us this devotion to him, this determination to realize within ourselves his ideal. We must not lose our perspective, our vision of the supreme Christ, when we enter into the detailed study of his life. We must not allow our practical religious interest to be stifled by our historical scholastic interest, when we undertake to ascertain more exactly the events of Christ's life and the features of his work. Some men make this mistake. But it should not be so with us, for we have seen Jesus in his wisdom, power, and glory, and we cannot forget him. We desire to know Christ as he was, to learn by historical study the actual Christ of the first century. If the ideal Christ which has grown up in our minds needs to be corrected by the gospel picture of the historical Christ, we have not lost him — rather we have found him.

And when we have found the true Christ, our duty is the same as it was before, to adore and to follow him. Some people in these days look with disfavor upon warmth of religious feeling. These persons are not wise counselors. Let us be fervent with love toward God and one another; let us be active and untiring in service to humanity. This is the real knowledge, the genuine imitation, of Christ.

We express our thanks to those who, responding to our request last month, have sent us comments and criticisms upon

the "Constructive Studies in the Life of Christ." All of these suggestions are receiving careful consideration. We should be glad to hear from others also about the Studies, in what respects they are good, and how they may be improved.

We feel some confidence that the new method adopted in the present volume for noticing current book and periodical literature will meet with general approval. Six months ago we inquired what the wishes of our readers were for this department. There were many replies. A few desired us to continue the extensive quarterly bibliography which we have been supplying for the past two years. But the great majority preferred a simpler list given monthly. So we return to the earlier method of the BIBLICAL WORLD, and give a select list of books and articles chosen for their value to the general body of Bible students, omitting material which belongs to the scholastic field, and including only a few publications in foreign languages.

We believe that the interest and usefulness of this monthly list of current literature will be much increased by the system of annotations which is introduced. The number of books and periodicals multiplies so rapidly in these days that one cannot own, or even read, them all, yet neither can one afford to be ignorant of them. It needs some method by which one can extract the essence of these publications quickly and cheaply. Something can be done in this direction by these brief characterizations and epitomes of interesting books and articles. Books of special value will continue to receive full reviews; other books will be noticed with or without annotation, as merit suggests and space permits. Articles of special value will be annotated by a brief summary of the discussion and conclusion, as far as space limits allow. Concise criticism will not be absent from the annotations.

The more extensive bibliography, which some will still desire, is to be continued in the *American Journal of Theology*, so that none of our readers need be disappointed in the new arrangement.

THE EDITORS.